

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Working Group Recommendations

The State Board of Education believes in providing deaf/hard of hearing students a continuum of services and resources to ensure that all students receive a free appropriate public education. These recommendations aim at delivering a standards based education model for deaf/hard of hearing students with state supported resources (through a combination of funds directed for education for deaf/hard of hearing and funds appropriated through the regular public school budget process) for students' placement and communications needs. The State Board of Education is committed to providing the state, local school districts, parents and students with flexibility in choosing programs that meet student needs and state standards.

Overall Goal:

Deaf/hard of hearing education services will be provided to students in all regions of the state. State funds will be provided to regions in an appropriate manner to ensure all students receive appropriate services based on Individual Education Program (IEP) decisions.

Deaf/hard of hearing education programs will be overseen by a central administration that will ultimately be part of SBOE (State Board of Education), CDHH (Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), DHW (Department of Health and Welfare) or the SDE (State Department of Education). This central administration will include directors, coordinators, and employees of essential functional areas to oversee statewide programs (e.g., info/media clearinghouse, outreach, interpreter training, etc.).

First Steps: Standards and Programs:

The CDHH, SBOE, DHW and SDE will work cooperatively to develop standards for deaf/hard of hearing education programs by no later than August 2007. Program standards will be adopted by the SBOE no later than November 2007 and forwarded to the Legislature in January 2008.

A plan will be developed for a state education service infrastructure for deaf/hard of hearing education programs by January 2008.

Deaf/hard of hearing education programs will be required to include a continuum of communication options beginning at the time of identification of hearing loss and continuing throughout the student's education.

Deaf/hard of hearing education programs will be required to include a continuum of placement services. Such placements and accompanying supports and interventions should be based on the needs of the child.

Local school districts may create their own programs instead of participating in the state infrastructure and regional service delivery models. Any deaf/hard of hearing education programs offered by local districts will also be required to include a continuum of placement services, communication options and meet state deaf education standards.

Administration of Programs:

A deaf/hard of hearing education administrator will be hired by the CDHH, SBOE or SDE to oversee standards and program development and program transition no later than July 2007.

The SBOE will establish a transition committee that will assist the deaf/hard of hearing administrator. The transition committee will begin meeting in December 2006 and will include, at a minimum, a member of the SBOE, a member of the CDHH, a representative from the SDE, a representative from a school district and a representative from a postsecondary institution.

The deaf/hard of hearing administrator will work with the transition committee to develop a detailed plan for program delivery, funding and transition. This report will be provided to the SBOE, the SDE and the CDHH no later than October 2007 and forwarded to the Legislature in January 2008.

CDHH will act as an advisory group for deaf/hard of hearing education programs to assist evaluating that the needs of all students are being met and that programs are aligned to the deaf/hard of hearing education standards referenced above. The SBOE and the SDE will continue in their respective responsibilities to set standards for, monitor and assist all education programs in Idaho.

Funding:

The State will provide funding and resources to support the administrative structure that is necessary to operate the statewide system.

The transition committee will propose a funding structure to address facility needs for deaf/hard of hearing students.

As part of the 2007 legislative session, SBOE, SDE, or CDHH will receive funding to immediately hire a new deaf/hard of hearing education administrator to work with CDHH, SDE, the SBOE, school districts, parents, and other experts to design the education program, transition plan, and timeline. CDHH, SDE, or SBOE will also receive appropriate funding for support services related to this task (including funds for support staff, funds to conduct research and hold meetings of appropriate stakeholders).

Transition Time:

All current service delivery models will continue during the transition period and will be moved into the new structure based on the timeline. Existing service delivery models may be modified based on the recommendations of the transition committee.

The Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor will establish a committee to address the economic impact of the changes in deaf education programs on the Magic Valley, current ISDB employees and the state. This group will make recommendations to the Legislature no later than January 2008.

The goal is to transition from existing programs to the central administration and modified service delivery model by July 2009.